The Tufts Animal Care and Condition (TACC) scales were designed by Gary Patronek, VMD, to help animal control officers, cruelty investigators, veterinarians, and others more accurately determine the condition of a potentially neglected dog. First printed in the manual, Recognizing and Reporting Animal Abuse: A Veterinarian’s Guide, published by the American Humane Association (AHA), the TACC scales were field-tested by officers with the Massachusetts SPCA and are now used by Fort Wayne (Ind.) Animal Care and Control and other agencies.

With these guidelines in hand, an officer can objectively assess an animal’s physical condition and determine the degree of neglect or level of care being provided by the owner. After the officer has evaluated the dog’s health, he may simply offer the owner some care guidelines and discuss the potential health risks posed to the animal. But in more extreme cases, the officer might seize an animal, record the TACC score in his report, and submit the evaluation as evidence in a court case.

The TACC system helps field officers prioritize return visits while tracking the progress of cases, teaches new field personnel how to look for signs of neglect, and ensures consistent reporting throughout the agency. The objective scoring system also gives veterinarians a reliable way to corroborate their decision to seize or treat an animal in the event that a lawsuit arises afterward.

(continued)
II. Weather safety scale

To determine score, draw a line up from the current temperature and parallel to the dotted lines, and read score on bars. Common sense must be used to take into account the duration of exposure to any given temperature when assessing risk; even brief periods of high heat can be very dangerous, whereas a similar duration of exposure to cold temperatures would not be life-threatening.

**In warm or hot weather:**
- Subtract 1 pt. if water is available
- Subtract 1 pt. if dog is in a shaded area protected from full sun
- Add 1 pt. if dog is brachycephalic
- Add 1 pt. if dog is obese

**In cool or cold weather:**
- Add 1 pt. if toy dog
- Add 2 pts. if dog out in rain/sleet
- Subtract 1 pt. if dog is a northern or heavy-coated breed
- Subtract 1 pt. if dog has good shelter and bedding available
- Subtract 1 pt. if dog has been acclimated to cold temperatures

**In all weather conditions:**
- Add 1 pt. if dog is <6 months of age or elderly

Axes indicate temperature dog is exposed to, in °F

III. Environmental health scale

5 **Filthy**—many days to weeks of accumulation of feces and/or urine. Overwhelming odor, air may be difficult to breathe. Large amount of trash, garbage, or debris present; inhibits comfortable rest, normal postures, or movement and/or poses a danger to the animal. Very difficult or impossible for animal to escape contact with feces, urine, mud, or standing water. Food and/or drinking water contaminated.

4 **Very unsanitary**—many days of accumulation of feces and/or urine. Difficult for animal to avoid contact with waste matter. Moderate amount of trash, garbage, or clutter present that may inhibit comfortable rest and/or movement of the animal. Potential injury from sharp edges or glass. Significant odor makes breathing unpleasant. Standing water or mud difficult to avoid.

3 **Unsanitary**—several days of accumulation of feces and urine in animal’s environment. Animal is able to avoid contact with waste matter. Moderate odor present. Trash, garbage, and other debris cluttering animal’s environment but does not prohibit comfortable rest or normal posture. Clutter may interfere with normal movement or allow dog to become entangled, but no sharp edges or broken glass that could injure dog. Dog able to avoid mud or water if present.

2 **Marginal**—As in #1, except may be somewhat less sanitary. No more than 1-2 days’ accumulation of feces and urine in animal’s environment. Slight clutter may be present.

1 **Acceptable**—Environment is dry and free of accumulated feces. No contamination of food or water. No debris or garbage present to clutter environment and inhibit comfortable rest, normal posture and range of movement or pose a danger to or entangle the animal.

“Environment” refers to the kennel, pen, yard, cage, barn, room, tie-out or other enclosure or area where the animal is confined or spends the majority of its time. All of the listed conditions do not need to be present in order to include a dog in a specific category. The user should determine which category best describes a particular dog’s condition.
Interpretation of the TACC score from scales I–IV

The Tufts Animal Condition and Care (TACC) score is assessed from the number of points read off either the Body Condition, Weather Safety, Environmental Health, or Physical Care Scale. When multiple scales are evaluated, the highest score on any scale should be used to determine the risk of neglect. Multiple high scores are indicative of greater neglect, risk, or inhumane treatment than a single high score.

Disclaimer: The TACC score is intended to be a simple screening device for determining when neglect may be present, for prioritizing the investigation of reported animal cruelty cases and as a system for investigative agencies to use to summarize their case experience. The TACC score is not intended to replace definitive assessment of any animal by a veterinarian or law enforcement agent. A low TACC score does not preclude a diagnosis of abuse, neglect, or a dog requiring veterinary care upon more careful examination of an animal and its living situation.